Start of Resources on David Friedman

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Biography of David Friedmann (1893-1980)

Dav. Friedman(n) a.k.a. David Friedmann was born in 1893 in Mährisch Ostrau, Austria, now Ostrava, Czech Republic. He ventured from this industrial city to Berlin in 1911. He learned the techniques of copper etching and lithography from Hermann Struck and was awarded a scholarship to study art with Lovis Corinth. With the breakout of World War I, he volunteered for the Austro-Hungarian Army and served between 1917-1918 as an army artist. He was commissioned to draw battle scenes at the Russian Front and was decorated several times for producing sketches very close to the actual fighting. Thereafter, he sketched and painted portraits of generals and soldiers who had distinguished themselves in battle. This was the first of many interruptions in his artistic career.

After returning to Berlin, he had his first exhibition at the Akademie der Künste, on Pariser Platz, in the spring of 1919 and published some of his works in the Jewish newspaper "*Schlemiel*". David Friedmann gained recognition for his artistic work published in various newspapers, as well as exhibitions in the Berliner Secession and numerous galleries throughout Germany. His specialty was portraits drawn from real life. Besides politicians and dignitaries, he also produced portraits of famous celebrities, opera singers, actors, musicians and sports stars, including Albert Einstein, Ramsey MacDonald, and Yehudi Menuhin. He also He is renown for a series of lithographs, "*Köpfe berühmter Schachmeister*", (Portraits of Famous Chess Masters) and "*Das Schachmeister Tournier in Mährisch Ostrau, Juli 1923*" (The Chess Master Tourney…).

In December 1938, he fled from the Nazis with his wife Mathilde and infant daughter Mirjam Helene to Prague, with only his artistic talent as a means to survive. He introduced himself to the Jewish community hoping to interest them in having their portraits sketched for his album and perhaps a possible book. He produced many portraits of prominent Jews and personalities, including František Weidmann, Jakob Edelstein, Fredy Hirsch, and František Zelenka. Some of these photo reproductions miraculously survived, however, every artwork that was produced until 1938 in Germany, and later in Prague until 1941, was confiscated by the Gestapo.

The Friedmann family was deported on October 16, 1941, the first transport from Prague to the Lodz Ghetto, in Poland. As the ghetto was evacuated at

the end of August of 1944, he was separated from his wife and child who did not survive the Holocaust. He was transported to Concentration Camps Auschwitz-Birkenau, Gleiwitz I, followed by a grueling death march to Blechhammer. David Friedmann was liberated January 21, 1945, at the age of fifty-one years and believed there was a reason for his survival. His burning desire was to show the world what persecution, torment, and agony was like as practiced by the Nazis, so that it would never happen again.

David Friedmann was determined to continue with his art and began a new collection portraying what he witnessed and experienced, translating his memories into over 100 individual works. They show the evolution of the Holocaust from deportation to the Lodz Ghetto and several concentration camps, until his liberation. He supplemented his drawings with descriptions of the scenes depicted in his works to create a singularly detailed pictorial and written record of the Holocaust. His attention to detail and his keen observation was evident in this powerful series entitled, "*Because They Were Jews!*", the first art collection to be accepted by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC. Seven of his first drawings produced in 1945 surfaced in the collections of the Yad Vashem Art Museum, Jerusalem, Israel.

His ability to portray human documentaries is also evident in "*The Coal Miners of Habartov, Czechoslovakia*", which include sixteen oil paintings and one watercolor. They depict the life, equipment, and working conditions of the coal miners and the people of Habartov, circa 1946. It is interesting to note that these paintings were created at the same time as the Holocaust art. Although he believed that the 'Holocaust art' was his most important work, the trip to the coal-mining region offered him the necessary respite from the torment and agony of his memories.

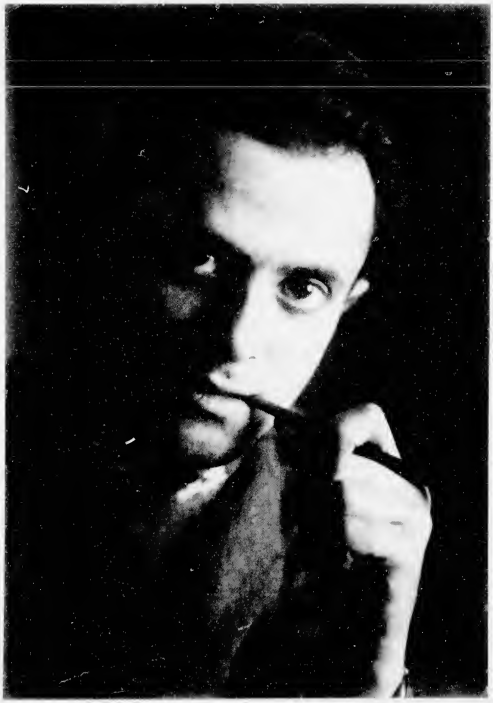
David Friedmann married Hildegard Taussig in 1948, but instead of settling down to enjoy their new life together, they fled Communist Czechoslovakia for Israel in 1949. The government had prohibited the artwork from leaving Czechoslovakia. However, he successfully contrived a plan to get his artwork safely out of the country. In 1954, the Friedmann family, now including a daughter also named Miriam, immigrated to the United States. David Friedmann embarked on a new career in commercial art with General Outdoor Advertising to support his family. GOA transferred the family from New York City to Chicago and finally, to the St. Louis branch of the

company. The Friedmann family became United States citizens in 1960 and dropped the double "n" spelling in their name.

During his lifetime, David Friedmann produced a large body of artistic work. Besides "*The Coal Miners*" and the 'Holocaust artwork', he produced many different series including various still life and genre themes, portraits, landscapes, and abstract art. He also created a unique exhibition entitled, "*Enjoyment in Libraries with the Candid Pencil of David Friedman*". This series of about 100 drawings are life studies of people reading and studying in various St. Louis libraries. They capture the essence of the unsuspecting public's enjoyment of the library between 1962-1972 and were exhibited in various libraries in St. Louis, Missouri and Rockland County, New York. He also enjoyed to portray himself and his wife through sketches, drawings, and oil paintings from 1947 until a year before he died in 1980, at the age of eighty-six, in St. Louis, Missouri.

David Friedmann is a distinguished artist, having achieved acclaim and a great reputation as a painter known for his portraits. He was an outstanding illustrator, as well as recognized for his drawings, paintings, graphics, etching, lithography, and work in the advertising industries. However, his greatest contribution was his devoted commitment to produce an eyewitness testament dedicated to the six million Jewish victims of Nazi persecution.

Miriam Friedman Morris
January 15, 2001



David Friedmann, World War I Austrian Officer
Petrikau, Poland, August 26, 1918

He was commissioned to draw battle scenes at the Russian Front and was decorated several times for producing sketches very close to the actual fighting. Thereafter, he sketched and painted portraits of generals and soldiers who had distinguished themselves in battle.

Notes for

Trieb zur Kunzt

(Driving Force to Art)

David Friedman(n) wrote the first part of his autobiography with the intention to complete his life story. He wrote 110 pages up to the beginning of World War I, the first interruption of his career and therefore, a fitting conclusion to Part I of the manuscript.

Trieb zur Kunzt is about an artistically talented young man who left his birthplace Mährisch-Ostrau (Ostrava) Czechoslovakia, in 1911, to study art and seek better opportunities in the cosmopolitan city of Berlin. David Friedman wanted to become an accomplished artist and this manuscript is about his "driving force" to achieve this goal. He writes about the events leading to his fortunate meeting with Max Liebermann, his important studies with Hermann Struck and Lovis Corinth.

David Friedman prepared two versions of this first part of *Trieb zur Kunzt*, as well as revised the outlines. He was probably not satisfied with his first result. It seems that pages 74 - 110 are the same in the first and second versions.

He had hoped to interest a publisher in his work (as per his letter to Kurt Desch Verlag, Munich, Germany). This letter explains his intentions for the remainder of the book. He had also prepared an outline for Part II and noted that there would be further chapters. However, this was the 1960's, a time when there was little interest in the life and artwork of a Holocaust survivor. He must have been greatly discouraged, for the manuscript was never finished. David Friedman placed his formidable energy into the series, *"Because They Were Jews!"* the masterful portrayal of what he witnessed and experienced in the Lodz Ghetto and various concentration camps. This series of over seventy-five paintings, drawings, and etchings was the first artwork accepted to the collections of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, in Washington, D.C.

Miriam Friedman Morris
October 22, 2001

End of Resources on David Friedman